

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 287555

EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEL AVIV 7945 ACTION SECSTATE INFO
DAMASCUS NOV 23.

QUOTE: S E C R E T TEL AVIV 7945

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM TOON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR IS US LE

SUBJ: SECURITY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

REF: STATE 286676

1. I SAW RABIN AT 1600 NOVEMBER 23; EVRON, EIRAN AND MIZRACHI
WERE ALSO PRESENT. I TOLD RABIN YOU HAD RECEIVED WITH INTEREST
HIS VIEWS ON SOUTHERN LEBANON GIVEN ME ON SUNDAY, THAT YOU
REMAINED DEEPLY CONCERNED BY DEVELOPMENTS THERE, AND THAT YOU
WISHED FURTHER CLARIFICATION OF HOW HE FELT SITUATION CAN
BEST BE CONTROLLED. I THEN SET FORTH POINTS IN REFTEL.

2. RABIN SAID HE HAD HOPED THAT SINCE WE HAVE A PRESENCE IN
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BOTH BEIRUT AND DAMASCUS AND ISRAELIS DO NOT WE MIGHT BE IN

POSITION TO PROVIDE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS WE CORRECTLY POSED. HE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN KNOWING OUR VIEW ON THE NATURE AND EFFICACY OF THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP AMONG SARKIS, THE PLO, AND THE SYRIANS. WHATEVER THE MACHINERY IS, RABIN FELT STRONGLY THE SYRIANS MUST TELL ARAFAT "NO MONKEY BUSINESS". HE REITERATED HIS HOPE THAT WE WOULD COME FORWARD WITH OUR OWN PROPOSALS, BASED ON OUR ON-SITE OBSERVATIONS, FOR CONTROLLING THE SITUATION.

3. I SAID I WOULD REPORT HIS CONCERN, BUT MEANWHILE WE WOULD APPRECIATE HIS ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS I HAD POSED--SPECIFICALLY, HOW FAR SOUTH CAN HE TOLERATE A SYRIAN PRESENCE? HE THEN MADE-- AND LATER REPEATED--FOLLOWING POINTS: A) SYRIAN FORCES MUST MOVE NO FURTHER SOUTH THAN THEY NOW ARE, AND B) NO TERRORIST ACTIVITY CAN BE PERMITTED. TO ENFORCE THIS, HE ASKED THE FOLLOWING: CAN SARKIS ESTABLISH A LEBANESE FORCE, USING THE SHIA-CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS AS A BASIS, WHICH WOULD BE RECOGNIZED BY SYRIANS AND LEBANESE AS BEING UNDER SARKIS' COMMAND, TO PATROL THE AREA ADJACENT TO THE ISRAELI BORDER?

4. SECONDLY, RABIN WONDERED IF, IN OUR VIEW, SARKIS WAS IN A POSITION TO MOVE A PURELY LEBANESE SECURITY UNIT, LIMITED IN NUMBERS AND ARMAMENT, INTO TYRE AND NABATIYA TO CONTROL THE TERRORISTS AND COMMIT HIMSELF FULLY TO ACHIEVEMENT OF THIS TASK. THIS WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE ISRAELIS, PROVIDED THERE U.S. ASSURANCE OF SUCH A COMMITMENT BY SARKIS AND, IF CONTROL DOES NOT PROVE EFFECTIVE, WITH UNDERSTANDING THAT U.S. WOULD PERMIT ISRAEL TO HAVE A FREE HAND? HE EMPHASIZED HE MUST BE ABLE TO EXPLAIN TO THE CABINET THAT ISRAEL HAS RETAINED FREEDOM OF ACTION IF CONTROL BREAKS DOWN AND VIOLATIONS OCCUR.

5. I SAID THAT THIS WOULD BE DIFFICULT UNDERTAKING FOR US, BUT I WOULD PUT HIS QUESTIONS TO WASHINGTON. I THEN BRIEFED RABIN IN CONFIDENCE ON SOME OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING SOUTH LEBANON MADE BY SHIHABI TO MURPHY. SHIHABI HAD STRESSED THAT ONLY THE SYRIANS ARE ABLE AT PRESENT TIME TO CONTROL THE TERRORISTS IN THE SOUTH AND THAT IT WOULD BE EASY FOR THE PALESTINIANS TO PLAY TRICKS ON NON-SYRIAN TROOPS AND EVADE THEIR CONTROL. I ALSO TOLD RABIN THAT SHIHABI HAD SAID CATEGORICALLY THAT SYRIA WANTS NO TROUBLE WITH ISRAEL. CAUTIONING RABIN HE SHOULD HANDLE MY REPORT OF SHIHABI'S VIEWS WITH CARE, I THEN ASKED PRIME MINISTER

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FOR HIS CURRENT READING OF THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND.

6. RABIN SAID HIS INFORMATION WAS THAT THE SYRIANS HAD MADE NO FURTHER MOVES. THEY HAVE GONE AS FAR AS THE REFINERIES SOUTH OF SIDON, BUT NO FURTHER. HE SAID ISRAELI FORCES HAVE UNDERTAKEN NO FURTHER DEPLOYMENT SINCE THE MOVEMENT OF THE TWO BATTALIONS AND THE TANK COMPANIES YESTERDAY. HE EMPHASIZED THAT IT IS MOST IMPORTANT NOW THAT NO PARTY TAKE UNILATERAL ACTION--

ANY MOVE BY THE SYRIANS OR PALESTINIANS WOULD CAUSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS SINCE ISRAELIS ARE TENSE AND UP-TIGHT.

7. I COMPLAINED TO RABIN ABOUT TODAY'S PRESS REPORTS THAT I HAD BEEN SUMMONED ON SUNDAY TO HEAR OF ISRAELI CONCERNS ABOUT LEBANON AND THAT I HAD BEEN GIVEN AN ISRAELI WARNING TO CONVEY TO SYRIA. RABIN MUST KNOW--AS I HAD TOLD HIM PREVIOUSLY--THAT THIS SORT OF INDISCRETION GAVE US SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH SYRIANS. RABIN ASSURED ME THE LEAD DID NOT COME FROM HIS OFFICE. (EIRAN LATER DREW MY ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THE AUTHORS OF THESE REPORTS WERE MILITARY JOURNALISTS, IMPLYING THAT THE LEAKS CAME FROM PERES' OFFICE. I TOLD HIM IF THAT WERE THE CASE, EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO MUZZLE PERES.) RABIN SAID HE WOULD UNDERTAKE TO CORRECT THE RECORD ON THE QUESTION OF ISRAEL'S WARNINGS TO THE SYRIANS THROUGH THE AMERICANS. HE SAID HE WOULD DO THIS BY EXPLAINING ON AN APPROPRIATE OCCASION THAT WE HAVE CONSULTED CLOSELY THROUGHOUT THE LEBANESE CRISIS AND THAT ISRAEL HAS CONSISTENTLY MADE CLEAR ITS POSITION TO THE UNITED STATES. MEANWHILE HE SUGGESTED--AND I AGREED--THAT RATHER THAN ENCOURAGE FURTHER PRESS SPECULATION BY OUR SILENCE THAT PRESS BE INFORMED THAT WE MET TODAY FOR FURTHER EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON. TOON
UNQUOTE ROBINSON

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